

## A TRAGEDY ON THE RANCH.

By W. C. Morrow.

Sitting at the open window of her room in the upper story of the farm-house on the Rancho San Gregorio, Señora Violante Ovando de McPherson watched, with the deepest interest, a cloud of dust which rose in the still May air far down the valley; for it was evident that the color in her cheeks and the sparkle in her violet black eyes spoke a language of devotion and happiness. Her husband was coming home, and with him his vaqueros, after a tedious drive of cattle to San Francisco. He had been gone but a month; but what an interminable absence that is to a wife of a year! She had watched the fading of the wild golden poppies; she had seen the busy workers of the bee-hives laying up their stores of honey culled from the myriads of flowers which carpeted the valley; and she had ridden over the Gabilan hills to see the thousands of her husband's cattle which dotted them. She had been respectful of her housekeeping duties, and had directed Alice, the sewing-girl, in the making of garments for the approaching hot season. Yet, husky as she thought she was, and important as she imagined herself to be in the management of the great ranch, time had dragged itself by in manacles. But now was coming the cloud of dust to lift the cloud of loneliness, and if ever a young wife's heart quickened with gladness, it was hers.

Presently the fine young Scotchman leaped from his horse, clasped his wife in his arms, asked a few hurried questions concerning her welfare during his absence, untied a small buckskin-hag which depended from the pommel of his saddle, and, remarking: "I thought you might need some spending-money, Violante," held up the hag containing gold, containing a hundred times more gold than her simple tastes and restricted opportunities would permit her to employ. But was not her Robert the most generous of men? Other eyes than hers saw it—those of Basilio Velasco, one of the vaqueros—a small, swarthy man, with the blackest and sharpest of eyes, in which just then was a peculiar glitter.

What a handsome couple were the young husband and wife, as arm-in-arm, they entered the house—he so large, and red, and masculine, she so dark, and reliant, and feminine! Beautiful Spanish girls were plentiful in those youthful days of California; but Violante had been known as the most beautiful of all the maidens from the Santa Barbara Channel to the Bay of Monterey. Hard-headed and fiery-tempered Scotch Presbyterian, gentle, patient, and faithful Catholic, they were the happiest and most devoted of couples.

"Well, little Violante," he said, "take the hag up to your room, and give us dinner; for before we rest, we must ride over to the range and look after the cattle, and after that you and I shall have a good, long visit."

These pleasant duties were quickly dispatched, and the dusty men, led by her husband, galloped away. From the open window of her room she saw the receding cloud of dust, wondering at that urgent sense of duty which could make so fond a husband leave her, even though for a short time, after so long a separation. Thus she sat, dreamily thinking of her great happiness in having him once again at home, and drinking in the rich perfume of the racines of wistaria-blossoms which covered the massive vine against the house. This old vine, springing from the ground beneath the window at which she sat, spread its long arms almost completely over that part of the wall, divided on either side for the window, and hung gracefully from beneath the eaves, embowering their lovely owner in a tangled mass of purple blossoms. It was an exquisite picture—the pretty wife sitting there, in the whitest of lawns, looking out over the hills in this frame of gorgeous flowers—all the more charming from her unconsciousness of its beauty. Behind her, at the opposite side of the room, sat Alice, sewing in silence.

As the señora looked dreamily over the hills, she became aware of the peculiar actions of a man on horseback, who was approaching the house from the direction in which her husband and the vaqueros had disappeared. That which summoned her attention was the fact that the man was approaching by an irregular route, which no ordinary circumstance would have required. He had such a way of keeping behind the trees that she could not determine his identity. It looked strange and mysterious, and something impelled her to drop the lace curtain over the window, for behind it she could catch without danger of being seen.

The horseman disappeared, and this made her uneasiness all the greater, but she said nothing to Alice. Soon she noticed a man on foot approaching the house, in a watchful, skulking fashion, slipping from one tree or one bit of shrubbery to another. Then, with a swift run, he approached the house, and stealthily and noiselessly as a cat began to ascend to her window by clambering up the wistaria-vine. Her spirit quailed and her cheeks blanched when she saw the naked blade of a dagger held between his teeth. She understood his mission—it was her life and the gold; and the glittering eyes of the robber she recognized as those of Basilio Velasco. After a moment of nerveless terror the ancient, resisting blood of the Ovandos sprang into alert activity, and this gentlest and sweetest of young women armed her soul to meet Death on his own ground and his own terms, and try the issue with him.

She gave no alarm, for there was none in the house except herself and Alice. To have given way to fear would have destroyed her only hope of life. Quietly, in a low tone, she said:

"Alice, listen, but do not say a word!" There was an impressiveness in her manner that startled the nervous, timid girl; but there was also in it a strength and self-reliance that reassured her. She dropped her work and regarded her mistress with wonder. "Look in the second drawer of the bureau. You will find a pistol there. Bring it to me quickly, without a word, for a man is clambering up the vine under my window to rob me, and if we make any outcry or lose our heads we are dead. Place full confidence in me, and it will be all right."

Alice, numb and nervous with fear, found the pistol and brought it to her mistress.

"Go and sit down and keep quiet," she was told; and this she did.

Violante, seeing that the weapon was loaded, cocked it, and glanced out the window. Basilio was climbing very slowly and carefully, fearing that the least disturbance of the vine would alarm the señora. When he had come sufficiently near to make her aim sure, Violante suddenly thrust aside the curtain, leaned out the window, and brought the barrel of the weapon in line with Velasco's head.

"What do you want, Basilio?" she asked.

Upon hearing the musical voice, the Spaniard quickly looked up. Had the bullet then imprisoned in the weapon been semi-crashing through his vitals, he would have received hardly a greater shock than that which quivered through his nerves when he saw the black barrel of the pistol, the small hand steady which held it aimed at his brain, and the pale and beautiful face above it. Thus holding the robber at her mercy, she said firmly to the girl:

"Alice, there is nothing to fear now. Run as fast as you can to the west end of the house, about a hundred yards away, and you will find this man's horse tied there somewhere in the shubbery. Mount it, and ride as fast as God will let you. Find my husband, and tell him I have a robber at his mercy."

The girl, almost fainting, passed out of the room, found the horse, and galloped away, leaving these two mortal enemies facing each other.

Velasco had heard all this, and he heard the horse clattering up the road to the range beyond the hills of Gabilan. The picture of a fierce and angry young Scotchman dashing up to the house and slaying him without a parley needed no elaboration in his dazed imagination. He gazed steadily at the señora and she at him; and, while he saw a strange pity and a sorrow in her glance, he saw also an unyielding determination. He could not speak, for the knife between his teeth held his tongue a prisoner. If only he could plead with her and beg for his life!

"Basilio," she quietly said, seeing that he was preparing to release one hand by finding a firmer hold for the other, "if you take either of your hands away from the vine I will shoot you. Keep perfectly still. If you make the least movement, I will shoot. You have seen me throw apples in the air and send a bullet through every one with this pistol."

There was no boastfulness in this, and Velasco knew it to be true.

"I would have given you money, Basilio, if you had asked me for it; but to come thus with a knife! You would have killed me, Basilio, and I have never been unkind to you."

If he could only remove the dagger from his mouth! Surely one so kind and gentle as she would let him go in peace if he could only plead with her. But to let the dagger fall from his teeth would he to disarm himself, and he was hardly ready for that; and there was much thinking and planning to be done within a very few minutes.

Velasco, still with his gaze on the black hole in the pistol-barrel, soon made a discouraging discovery; the position in which he had been arrested was an insecure and uncomfortable one, and the unusual strain that it brought upon his muscles became painful and exhausting. To shift his position even in the smallest way would be to invite the excursion of a bullet through his head. As the moments flew the strain upon particular sets of muscles increased his pain with alarming rapidity, and unconsciously he began to speculate upon the length of time that remained before his suffering would lead him into recklessness and death. While he was thus approaching a very agony of pain, with the end of all human endurance not far away, another was suffering in a different manner, but hardly less severely.

The beautiful señora held the choice of two lives in the barrel of her pistol; but that she should thus hold any life at all was a matter that astounded, perplexed, and agonized her; that she had the courage to be in so extraordinary a position amazed her beyond estimation. Now, when one reflects that he is courageous, his courage is questionable. And then, she was really so tender-hearted that she wondered if she could make good her threat to shoot if the murderer should move. That he believed she would was sufficient.

But after the arrival of her husband—what then? With his passionate nature could he resist the temptation to cut the fellow's throat before her very eyes? That was too horrible to think of. But—God!—the fellow himself had a knife! By thus summoning her husband was she not inviting him to a mortal struggle with a desperate man hetter armed than he? It would have been easy to liberate Basilio and let him go his way; but she knew that her husband would follow and find him. Now that the mischief of notifying him had been done, it was best to keep the prisoner with her, that she might plead for his life. Therein lay her hope that she could avert the shedding of blood by either of the men. Her suspense, her self-questionings, her dread of a terrible termination to an incident which had already assumed the shape of a tragedy, her fearful responsibility, the menacing possibility that she herself, in simple defense of her life, might have to kill Basilio, her trepidation on the score of her aim and the reliability of the pistol—all these things and others were wearing her out; and at last she, too, began to wonder how long she could bear the strain, and whether or not her husband would arrive in time to save her.

Meanwhile, Velasco, racked to the soul by the pains which tortured him, and driven to the wall by a desire to drop the dagger and plead for his life and by fear of parting with his weapon, was urged to despair, and finally to desperation. All the supplication that human face and eyes could show pleaded eloquently for him, and with this silent pleading came evidence of his physical agony. The muscles of his arms and legs twitched and trembled, and his labored breathing hissed as it split upon the edge of the knife. He was unable longer to control the muscles of his lips; the keen edge of his weapon found a way into the flesh at either side of his mouth, and two small streams of blood trickled down his chin and fell upon his breast. Not for a moment did he

take his gaze from her eyes; and thus these two regarded each other in a silence and a stillness that were terrible. A crisis had to come. Here was a test of nerve that inevitably would make a victim of one or the other. The spectacle of the man's agony, the pitiful sight of his imploring look, were more than the feminine flesh of which Violante was composed could hear.

The crash came—Basilio was the first to break down. Whether voluntarily or not, he released his hold upon the knife, which went clattering through the vine to the ground. In another instant, his tongue, now free, began pouring forth a supplication in the Spanish language with an eloquence which Violante had never heard equalled.

"Oh, señora!" he said; "who but an angel could show a mercy tenderer than human? And yet, as I hope for the mercy of the Holy Virgin, there is a sweetness and kindness in your face that belong to an angel of mercy. Oh, Mother of God! I surely thy unworthy son has been brought into this strait for the trying of his soul and for its chastisement and purification at the hands of thy sweetest and gentlest of earthly daughters; for thou hast put it into her heart—which is as pure as her face is beautiful—to spare me from a most horrible end. Thou hast whispered into her mother soul that one of thy sons, however base and undeserving, should not be sent unsent to the judgment-seat of the most Holy Christ, thy son. Through the holy church thou hast enlightened her soul to the duties of a Christian, for in her beautiful face shines the radiance of heaven—ah, señora! see me plead for mercy! Behold the agonies which beset me, and let my sufferings unlock the door of your heart. Let me go in peace, señora; and you shall find in me a slave all the days of my life—the humblest and most devoted of slaves, happy if you heat me, glorying in my slavery if you starve me, and giving praise to Almighty God if you trample me under your feet. Señora, señora, release me, for time is pressing—I can rarely escape if you let me go this instant. Would you have my blood on your hands? Can you face the Virgin with that? Oh, señora—señora!"

Her head swam, and all her senses were afloat in a sea of agonies. Still she looked down into his eyes as he continued his pleadings, but the outlines of his body were wavering and uncertain, and inexpressible suffering numbed her faculties. Still she listened vaguely to his outpouring of speech; and it was not until her husband, with two of his vaqueros, dashed up on horseback that either of these two strangely situated sufferers was aware of his approach. Seeing him, Violante threw her arms abroad, and the pistol went flying to the ground; and then she sank down to the floor, and the brilliant sunshine became night and the shining glories of the day all nothingness.

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She awoke and found herself lying on her bed, with her husband sitting beside her, caressing her hands and watching her anxiously. It was a little time before she could summon her faculties to exercise and to an understanding of her husband's endearing words; but, seeing him safe with her, her next thought was of Velasco.

"Where is Basilio?" she asked, starting up and looking fearfully about.

"He is safe, my dear one. Think no more of Basilio, who would have harmed my Violante. Be calm, for my sake, sweet wife."

"Oh, I can't, I can't! You must tell me about Basilio. And, in a frightened whisper, she asked: "Did you kill him?"

"No, loved one; Basilio is alive."

She sank back upon her pillow. "God he praised!" she whispered.

Suddenly she started again and looked keenly into her husband's eyes. "You have never deceived me," she hurriedly said; "but, Robert, I must know the truth. Have no fear—I can hear it. For God's sake, my husband, tell me the truth!"

Alarmed, he took her in his arms, and said: "Be calm, my Violante; for as the Almighty is my witness, Basilio is alive."

"Alive! alive!" she cried; "what does that mean? You are keeping something back, my husband. I know your passionate nature too well—you could not let him off so easily. Tell me the whole truth, Robert, or I shall go mad!"

There was a frantic earnestness in this that would have made evasion unwise.

"I will, Violante; I will. Listen—for upon my soul, this is the whole truth: When I saw you drop the pistol and sink back upon the floor, I knew that you had fainted. I ordered the vaqueros to secure the weapon and make Basilio descend to the ground. Then I ran upstairs, placed you on the bed, loosened your clothing, and did what I could to restore you. But you remained unconscious—"

"Basilio! Basilio! tell me about him."

"I went to the window and sent one of the men to the hacienda for a doctor for you, and told the other to bring Basilio to the room. He came in very weak and trembling, for he had fallen from the vine and was slightly stunned, but not much hurt. He expected me to kill him here in this room, but I could not do that—I was afraid on your account, Violante. He was very quiet and ill—"

"Hurry, Robert, hurry!"

"He said nothing. I spoke to him. He hung his head and asked me if I would let him pray. I told him I would not kill him. A great light broke over his face. He fell at my feet and clasped my knees and kissed my boots and wept like a child. It was pitiful, Violante."

"Poor Basilio!"

"He begged me to punish him. He removed his shirt and implored me to beat him. I told him I would not touch him. He said he would be your slave and mine all his life; but he insisted that he must make some physical atonement—he must be punished. 'Very well,' I said. Then I turned to Nicolas and told him to give Basilio some light punishment, as that would relieve his mind. Nicolas took him down and lashed him to the back of a horse, and turned the animal

into the horse corral. Then Nicolas came back and told me what he had done. I replied that it was all right, and that so soon as I could leave you I would go and release Basilio. And then I told Nicolas to go to the range and look up Alice and bring her home, for she was too weak to come back with me."

"And Basilio is in the corral now?"

"Yes."

"How was he lashed to the horse?"

"I don't know—Nicolas didn't tell me; but you may be sure that he is all right."

She threw her arms around her husband's neck and kissed him again and again, saying: "My noble, generous husband. I love you a thousand times more than ever. Now go, Robert, at once, and release Basilio."

"I can't leave you, dear."

"You must—you shall! I am fully recovered. If you don't go, I will."

"Very well."

No sooner had he left the room than she sprang out of the bed, caught up a penknife, and noiselessly followed him; he did not suspect her presence close behind him as he went toward the corral. When they had gone thus a short distance from the house, her alert ear caught a peculiar sound that sent icicles shooting through her body. They were feeble cries of human agony, and they came from a direction other than that of the corral. Helplessly, and therefore unwise, she ran toward their source, without having summoned her husband, and soon she came upon a fearful spectacle.

McPherson pursued his way to the corral; but when he arrived there, he was surprised not to find Basilio in the inclosure. The gate was closed—the horse could not have escaped through it. Looking about, he read the signs of a commotion that must have occurred among the horses, caused, undoubtedly, by the strange sight of a man lashed in some peculiar way to the back of one of their number. The ground was torn by flying hoofs in all directions; there had been a wild stampede among the animals. Even when he entered, possibly more than a half-hour after Basilio was introduced among them, they were huddled in a corner, and snorted in alarm when he approached them. The horse to which Nicolas had lashed Basilio was not to be seen. Annoyed at the stupidity of Nicolas, McPherson looked about until he found the place in the fence through which Basilio's horse had broken; only two of the rails had been thrown down. Alarmed and distressed, McPherson leaped over the fence, took up the trail of the horse, and followed it, running. Presently he discovered that the horse, in his mad flight, had broken through the fence inclosing the apiary, and had played havoc among the twenty or more bee-hives therein. Then McPherson saw a spectacle that for a little while took all the strength out of his body.

The señora, guided by a quicker sense than that of her husband, had gone straight to the apiary. There she saw the horse with Basilio, naked to the waist, strapped upon his back, and the animal was plunging madly among the beehives, kicking them to fragments as the vicious insects pried him with their stings. Basilio was tied with his face to the sun, which poured its fierce rays into his eyes; for Nicolas was devoted to the señora, and he was determined to make matters as uncomfortable for the ingrate as possible. Upon Basilio's unprotected body the bees swarmed by hundreds, giving him a score of stings to one for the horse, and he was utterly helpless to protect himself. Already the poison of a thousand stings had been poured into his face and body; his features were hideously swollen and distorted, and his chest was puffed out of resemblance to a human shape, and was livid and ghastly.

Without a moment's hesitation, the señora flew through the gate and went to the deliverance of Basilio, praying to God with every breath. His cries were feeble, for his strength was nearly gone, and his incredibile agony, abated by the poison of the bees, had sent his wits astray. For Violante to approach the maddened horse and the swarming mass of bees was to offer herself to death; but what cared she for that, when another's life was at stake! Into this desperate situation she threw herself. With the coolness of a trained horsewoman, she finally twisted the fingers of one hand into the frantic horse's nostrils, bringing it instantly under control. In another moment, unmindful of the stings which the bees inflicted upon her face and hands, she had cut Basilio's lashings and caught his shapeless body in her arms as it slipped to the ground. Then, taking him under the arms, she dragged him, with uncommon strength, from the inclosure and away from the murderous assaults of the bees.

He moaned; his head rolled from one side to the other. His eyes were closed by the swelling of the lids, and he could not see her; but even had this not been so, he was past knowing her. She laid him down in the shade of a great oak, and she saw from his faint and interrupted gasps that in another moment all would be over with him. Unconscious of the presence of her husband, who now stood reverently, with uncovered head, behind her, she raised to heaven her blanched face and beautiful eyes, and softly prayed: "Holy mother of Jesus, hear the prayer of thy wretched daughter, and intercede for this unshripened spirit." She glanced down at Basilio, and saw that he was dead. Feebly she staggered to her feet, and, seeing her husband, cried out his name, stretched out her arms toward him, and sank unconscious into his strong grasp; and thus he bore her to the house, kissing her face, while tears streamed down his cheeks.

SAN FRANCISCO, May, 1892.

On the day of William Astor's funeral, the town of Astoria, in Oregon, will be engaged in celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the discovery by Captain Gray of the Columbia River.

Paris has already in circulation a new word to describe something particularly outrageous or horrible. It is "Rav-acholesque."

## LATE VERSE.

### Falstaff's Song.\*

Where's he that died o' Wednesday?  
What place on earth hath he?  
A tailor's yard beneath, I wot,  
Where worms approaching be;  
For the wight time cometh o' Wednesday,  
Just as the light turneth to clay.  
Is dead as the varlet turned to clay  
A score of years ago.

Where's he that died o' Sabba' day?  
Good Lord, I'd not be he!  
The best of days is foun' enough  
From this world's fare to flee;  
And the saint that died o' Sabba' day  
Wot he? he durst yet to grow,  
Is dead as a sinner brought to pray  
A hundred years ago.

Where's he that died o' yesterday?  
What better chance hath he?  
To clink the can and toss the pot  
When this knight's jumbets be?  
For the lad that died o' yesterday  
Is just as dead as he.  
As the swain knave may laid away  
A thousand years ago.

—Edmund Clarence Stedman in the Cosmopolitan.

### The Bonnet Blue.

The day is done, the gloaming hour  
For lover's trusts is near.  
And she hath left her turrel bower  
To meet her cavalier.  
She cometh down the path of the earl  
For when the cock crew,  
And he's the grandson of a churl,  
And wears a bonnet blue,  
Oh, sweeter is the whispered vow  
For that might be the last seen,  
No blushing then than he I know,  
Was e'er in greenwood seen.  
No grace than hers is more divine,  
No heart more fond and true;  
She lets the roisteron pine  
To pledge a bonnet blue.  
She thinketh on her lover's state  
And drops a pensive tear;  
She looks upon her lowly mate,  
And she is straight in cheer.  
He holds her in his strong embrace,  
He's a gallant, bold, gay cavalier;  
She dreads not danger nor disgrace,  
Beside her Bonnet Blue.

—C. L. Betts in the Independent.

The Hunting of Rotheimur.  
Lord Graeme has come to his own again,  
Hell roam no more o'er sea,  
And all for the love of a low-born lass,  
For a winsome maid was she.

He's courted her on the green brae-side,  
Beyond the hillside fold;  
He's wedded her for her comely face  
And her looks like the burnished gold.  
Long made she mean for her mother dear,  
And the house where she was born,  
But she spoke no word of the bitter lad  
Who reaped in her father's corn.

Weep not, weep not, my lady gay,  
Thought I'll o'er the lea;  
Ere long art thou past and gone  
I'll come again in thee.

But so I'll sit on the fair day's end,  
Atneath the midnight hour,  
That good Lord Graeme from the hunting came  
And stood in his lady's bower.

Oh, why do ye come so dark and late,  
When all men are at rest?  
And why is the steel cap on your brow,  
And the buckler on your breast?

And why hath my good lord left the chase,  
That is but scarce begun?  
Now have ye lost your bonny hay steed,  
Or is the hunting done?"

Oh, I have hunted the long day through,  
From the rising of the sun,  
But or ever he rise the morrow's morn,  
My hunting will be done.

Now, what was you, my lady gay,  
Slipped past me at the door?"  
Oh, 'twas nothing but your good greyhound  
That sleeps on my chamber floor.

Now, what is you gear of hidden grey  
That tangles in my spurs?"  
Oh, my man Jean was here but now,  
And 'tis but a clout of hers."

So I ride on wide your power window,  
And look out o'er the lone land,  
And such a hunt as never ye saw,  
At day-dawn shall ye see."

He's mounted him on his bonny hay,  
And let the bounds run free,  
And fast they followed a steaming man,  
Who rode towards the sea.

They hunted high, they hunted low,  
The hounds ran swift before,  
And ayte they harried the wildered man,  
And ayte they pressed him sore.

The cold sweat stood upon his face,  
As they drove him here and there,  
And he turned and doubled in his dread,  
As doubles a hunted hare.

Oh, never a word Lord Graeme he said,  
And never did he bate;  
With the first dawn of the dawning day,  
They turned o'er the Castle Waste.

But he hummed the o'erword of a song,  
And his lips were smiling gay,  
As he bared his broadsword sharp and long,  
And galloped besides his prey.

And still as the doomed man cursed and wailed,  
And cried in his strong despair,  
Lord Graeme leaned over his saddle-bow,  
And played with the broadsword bare.

And now he would make a feint to strike,  
And now he would seem to spurn,  
But ever he spurred his bonny hay  
By the flank of the spent white mare.

And when the man seemed like to swoon,  
And his arms swung to and fro,  
The gray steel struck his body through  
And pierced him at a blow.

\* Strange it seems, when one first discovers it, that Shakespeare put no ballad, tavern-catch, or other song in the mouth of pewter-clinking Sir John. But he certainly left us a most tempting refrain for one.—E. C. S.

## A NEW ATTACK ON ZOLA.

### "Parisina" on Loti's Admission to the French Academy.

"Lieutenant Julien Viatud first became celebrated as "Pierre Loti" some twelve years ago, when "Le Mariage de Loti" was published by Meiss Adam in the *Newall's Review*. He had not, however, published "Aziyadé," but it had not attracted much attention. In 1872, as a midshipman, he visited Tahiti and contracted one of those temporary marriages that have formed the subject of so many of his stories. The Tahitian heroine was Karahu. Then he was sent to Senegal as an ensign, and there gathered the material for "Le Roman d'un Spaniard." Next he sailed for Salomon, where he met the Circassian girl Aziyadé. In 1877, he returned to France, and, on a coast-guard vessel at Rochefort, he found the sailor who was the hero of "Mon Frère Yves." After the conclusion of peace between China and France, Loti went to Japan, and the result of his visit was "Madame Chrysanthème," and, on his homeward journey, he began his Breton novel, "Pêcheur d'Île." In France he married, and, during coast service, collected the sketches that make up "Propos d'Exil," "Japoneries d'Automne," and "Fleurs d'Ennui." "Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort," containing short stories of suffering and sorrow, followed these, and then came "Fantômes d'Orient," his latest work.—EOS.]

Pierre Loti is the man of whom every one is talking. He has been brought to the fore by donning a coat embroidered with Academic oak-leaves and acorns. His charms are the subject of conversation in Parisian drawing-rooms, his fascinating glance, his soulful temperament. His different and numerous loves are commented upon with great freedom and detail. Mme. Viatud, however, must be horribly jealous, not of his ante-matrimonial affections, but from serious and more recent huckslings.

When Loti made his opening speech at the Academy, the audience that had gathered to applaud the sailor-Academician was mostly composed of the feminine element—indeed, counting roughly, it did not seem to me that there were more than fifty men present, unless the Immortals on the reserved benches were included.

When he spoke feelingly of the "idealistic" novel as the only true and proper one, and tell tooth and nail on the "naturalist" novel and the "psychological" novel, the applause was enthusiastic. Emile Zola himself was among the audience, seated by the side of his wife on the second or third row in full view of all. Zola's friends were furious at Loti's remarks, and left the "dome"—as the great hall of the Institute is familiarly styled—vowing vengeance on the impudent lieutenant. The historian of the Rougon-Macquarts himself, however, preserved his equanimity (it would need something more to stir the Olympian rage of Zola), and indulged in no violent language. The next day, Pierre Loti, seeing from the criticisms in the newspapers that he had gone too far, wrote an apologetic letter to Zola, in which he endeavored, by dint of high-sounding compliments, such as "your immense genius," etc., to pacify the ruffled feelings of the naturalist romance-writer and his friends. The other responded in an equally flattering tone, and expressed "unbounded admiration" for the "exquisite" works of his rival.

This was, perhaps, the biggest of the blunders the newly fledged Academician made. But he made others. In the first place, everybody knows that in Academic receptions the new Immortal must, according to long-established custom, pronounce the eulogium of the deceased celebrity whose place he has been elected to fill; and one of the thirty-eight or thirty-nine other Immortals (they are seldom *au complet*), in a sort of "return-thanks" speech, eulogizes the lamb who has been added to their flock. Loti, instead of praising Octave Feuillet—the deceased member whose shoes he had stepped into—and his works, as he should have done, contrived to original by making a magnificent apology of his own charming self. Of course he made a few remarks on Feuillet, and those remarks were eulogistic; but it was always by comparison with Pierre Loti that he judged Octave Feuillet.

He then went on to impart to his audience his feelings, his longings, his mysterious Oriental fascinations for the languid Turkish woman, the sprightly yet dreamy Rarahu, etc., not a bit abashed by the presence of his gray-headed colleagues. It must be admitted these personal impressions of the sailor-novelist did not lack interest. For instance, when he told us how he had first heard of his election to the Academy at Algiers: he had rowed over to the town from his ship, and sent a sailor to the post-office to see if, by any chance, there was a telegram for him. When he saw the man come back with a dozen or so of blue bits of paper, he guessed the joyful news. He then said, in charming language, how kindly his fellow-officers had congratulated him on his success, and told us of his own elated thoughts. He had all the works of Octave Feuillet telegraphed for, and spent a year reading them while cruising about on board his vessel.

M. de Mézières, whose task it was to answer Loti, caught up this terrible *four*—as the French slang goes—and made a few very clever sentences out of it, at Loti's expense, in his own speech. "There is one thing," he said, "with which I would reproach my colleague, Pierre Loti, in a friendly way; he has robed me of that part of my subject on which I most counted for interesting my audience. He has spoken so charmingly of himself that anything I could add to the portrait would fall flat. He has also spoken of Octave Feuillet." This last sentence is beautiful; the word "also" must have made Pierre Loti wince. The remainder of M. de Mézières's allocution tended to show the latter how foolish of him it was to crush, as he did, both the naturalist and psychological novels.

Perhaps the most amusing thing is to look through the papers before and after Loti's speech, and to compare what is said of him now to what was said of him then. Then, he was a god, the merest details of whose life and character were worthy of adoration; now, no abuse is virulent enough to heap on his devoted head. We had all been acquainted with the interesting facts that he rouged his cheeks, painted his eyes, was in the habit of costuming himself, while in his own abode, in the most ridiculous of garbs; but we called it "eccentricities of genius." Poor Loti must be somewhat astonished and taken aback at hearing all his charming foperies, which he was accustomed to look upon as most fascinating, unmercilessly ridiculed in the press.

PARIS, April 15, 1892.

P.